

Michael Tyberg
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Committee on Student Promotions & Professional Standards

Dear members of the committee, I would like to begin by reiterating my commitment to do everything in my power to reach my potential as a doctor. I love being a student here and I recognize the value of all the help that you have given me until now in my education. Please continue to support me to become a doctor that will live up to your reputation.

The decision of the committee has weighed heavily upon me these past weeks. The realization that I might not practice medicine has catalyzed me to make changes in my life. I scrutinized the events that has brought me before you and discussed them with Dean David and Dr. Witt. Together we tried to analyze what exactly the problem was and how to solve it. I then implemented the ideas that we discussed, incorporating them into my life for now and the future.

When I heard the decision of the board it came as a shock to me. After the shock and denial passed I was left with a drained feeling. The passion that drove me for years to exert myself diligently to accomplish my goals was suddenly in vain. I know you can all relate to me. Imagine how you would feel if one day your license to practice medicine was stripped from you and you couldn't perform what you love the most. All of you have a responsibility as board members to help the doctors of the future in their road to success and to make sure that Albert Einstein College of Medicine continues to be a source of great doctors. When you accepted me to this school you invested me with the responsibility to carry the Einstein name; the duty to be there for my patients no matter what. I am prepared for that responsibility. I am so proud to be a student of Albert Einstein and it would mean the world to me to stay here to become a doctor. Please let me explain why you can rely on me and why my past failures should be seen as exactly that, a thing of the past.

They say that good advice jars the ear. If this is so then my ears are sore. I have left no stone unturned while searching for an understanding of what happened. I have sought advice from advisors, friends, and family. Learning from the past will help me prevent it from happening in the future. I have identified each problem that has had a negative effect on my studies and ability to be a good doctor and have taken strong measures to correct them. I would also be open to hear ideas from anyone here. Any suggestions would be greatly appreciated and implemented immediately. Please let me identify the problems to you and how each one is being resolved.

Over my first year I spent a fixed amount of time every week helping my sick grandmother recuperate. I cooked her food on Friday afternoons (which might have made her sicker!) Over the weekend I fed her, carried out her exercises with her, encouraged her to stay positive, slept over, and basically was in every way her companion. She said

to me that she used to make a table setting for my grandfather and talk to him as if he was alive. Now, because I was with her, she could talk to me instead. Members of the Committee I don't have to tell you how precious that moment was. There was one weekend that I was not able to stay by her, but spontaneously I walked over just to say hello. When I walked in she was drying the tears from her eyes and she apologized saying that sometimes she got so lonely that she couldn't help it. For her the weekend was always a time for family when everyone would take a break from their schedules and spend time together. Yet here she was, paralyzed alone and broken.

I am not sure if this Committee finds me at fault for being there for her. It took precious time away from studying, time that could have made the difference between passing and failing. I hope that in light of the circumstances of her condition and our close relationship, the committee will not penalize me for this past indiscretion.

In terms of the upcoming years study time, the present healthy state of my Grandmother gave her back her independence and I back my weekends. In hindsight, I should have decelerated or taken a break from school rather than fail courses. I know it sounds foolish, but the truth is that I was unaware that there was a limit on the number of exams a student can fail. In truth there wasn't any limit when I began. I thought to myself that if I can just see this through with a lot of make-up exams then I will still come out the same in the end. When I spoke to the dean at the end of the year he told me that how the committee looks upon students who fail once too often. The problem was that I was in the hole already because I failed so many exams. Please do not look at my first year as an indication that I blithely walk into problems without taking account of what I am getting into. You have before you a mature student who takes his responsibilities seriously; a student who thinks about what he does and the consequences of his actions; a student who was willing to make his first year of medical school twice as hard in order to help someone he loves.

I discussed with the committee last time about my newlywed status. It was the best of times and it was the worst of times, literally. We all know that marriage can be the greatest constructive influence for one's aspirations or the greatest destructive force. There were two stages to my progression to married life that disrupted my goals for this year as a student. One was the actual process of getting married and all the mental and physical energy that it consumed. In addition there was the stress of two diverse personalities attempting to share their space.

The wedding was planned for midwinter vacation so that it wouldn't interfere with school. Unfortunately it became such an issue that I became obligated to drop my courses. The dean explained to me that this was precisely why the deceleration program exists. Everyone has unexpected crisis in their lives, a close relative dies for example, and the sensible decision is to take time off for the emergency and then return to your responsibilities. I dropped two courses and spent my newfound time grappling with the issues that confronted my fiancée and I. We met with student counselors and their assessment was that essentially we had a loving relationship fit for marriage, but a communication problem was causing friction. In a departure from what was my custom

in the previous year, I saw the problem coming and took steps that effectively prevented me from failing any exams up until my marriage. As a consequence of being notified that multiple failures are not acceptable I decelerated and showed flexibility by dropping courses when stressed. This strategy was successful up until the wedding, concluding the first stage of my progression into married life.

With the next semester underway it became clear that we had more than just difficulty communicating. The next exam I had coming up was my second biochemistry test. My biochemistry score is a puzzle that needs to be solved. I passed seven exams this year that were, unquestionably, of greater scope and difficulty. Furthermore I took biochemistry last year and the second time around the material is easier to grasp. The answer to this puzzle is that the week of the exam my wife and I had an enormous argument. I don't know if any of you can remember the first conflict that you had with your spouse, but I challenge you to take an exam while you are in the middle of it. When you go home at night you just feel the tension in the air. And if you don't go home and you stay in school late to study, it just exacerbates the situation. It was a no-win situation, and the casualty was that I failed.

This also explains why I failed the exam by such a small margin. I conscientiously kept up with my schedule of studying, but the last week of reading helps me integrate all the lectures into one whole and crystallizes the material. I didn't have that last week. It was similar episodes at home that hindered me from going to conference. I know the importance of attending conferences; it was going to the conference that nailed in the difference between Ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. In fact, Dr. Steinman in a meeting with me said that as far as he is concerned I know the material well enough to pass the course! It was the discord at home that took away the conference points and a total understanding of the material that would have made a vast difference.

Shortly thereafter I arranged a schedule to maximize my time and I etched this timetable in stone. I would wake up at 5:15 and study for an hour. Then I would drive to the Bronx, beating morning traffic, while listening to a recording of a lecture. Arriving at the lecture hall about 30 minutes before lecture, I would use the time to skim through the lecture and prepare an overview. I would get my own personal copy of that day's lecture so that at the end of studying that day in the library I would have listening material for my ride home. Really I have Dr. Penny Grossman to thank for counseling me to utilize my commute time. I would get home in time for supper with my wife and catch up on the day's events. Then I would crack out the books and spend my evening studying. This is the schedule that gave me good grades for the rest of the year. This is the schedule that my wife, Moriya, supported me through and will continue to support me through. I know Moriya will continue to help me because there wasn't a magical elixir that solved our problems. Our relationship is a learning experience that is constantly going through an evolution. We have learned to respect one another's mutual goals and help each other realize them. Since she is a loving wife, she acutely experiences the pain that I am now going through as a consequence of my academic challenges. She has shown me time and time again this year her dedication to me. I remember many occasions when I would have

to study till two in the morning and we would go to my parents so that I would have space to properly study. Her attitude was great the whole time and she would make me coffees and constantly encourage me to finish my study goals for that day. For a newlywed woman to spend no time with her husband, who is in the room right next door, and be a positive source of energy speaks for itself. There is a saying that sometime you have to take a step backward in order to take one forward. Our marriage after stepping backward is now taking great strides forward towards building a house that will be an excellent support base for my future career. You should be aware that my wife and I are seeing a psychologist, Dr. Schuk, who is helping us. I am not taking chances with my future, I am taking charge.

There does remain an issue that I would like to address, an important point that can carry great weight in helping you in your decision. Going through the process of committee action has forced me to take a long honest at myself. I feel that my good heart, a trait I have always prided myself on, was misused. First I help my grandmother and then I make compromises for my wife, but both at the expense of other responsibilities. It caused me to wonder whether perhaps the fault lay with me. That was a disturbing notion that became a priority of mine to investigate. As Dr. Penny Grossman pointed out, as life goes on it becomes even more complicated. Only more responsibilities pile up and I need to improve my skills of balancing them. I spoke to Dr. Witt about this issue and she suggested that I see someone to get help. I listened to her good sense and am currently being seen by Dr. Vardy, a psychiatrist. All of you are involved in my future and this essential step has helped me take that involvement and make real changes in my life for the better.

My goal in life is to become a doctor and help people and this dream can only come to fruition if you decide to give me a chance. I will show you the fruit of the progress that I have made: I will show you excellent grades, a perfect attendance, and the doctor that you sought when you accepted me to Albert Einstein. Please give me an opportunity to make you believers of my steadfastness. My grandmothers independence, marriage counseling with resulting exponential improvement, seeing a psychiatrist to help maintain equilibrium, and moving here to eliminate the commute and benefit from the school atmosphere are all significant changes. As a dedicated student in Albert Einstein College of Medicine I entreat you. Allow me to maintain my status as a student here and prove to you a better future. Thank you for your time and patience.

Sincerely,


Michael Tyberg